

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph at page 1, line 24 – page 2, line 7 with the following rewritten paragraph:

If the occlusion reducing type NO_x catalyst (which might hereinafter be simply called a catalyst or a NO_x catalyst) is disposed in an exhaust passageway of the internal combustion engine capable of performing the lean combustion, the catalyst absorbs NO_x contained in the exhaust gas when the exhaust gas having a lean air-fuel ratio flows, and releases NO_x, as NO₂, absorbed by the catalyst when the exhaust gas having a stoichiometric ratio (theoretical air-fuel ratio) or a rich air-fuel ratio flows. Further, this is reduced into N₂ by a reducing component such as HC and CO contained in the exhaust gas, thereby purging the NO_x by disassociation.